CS150-5

CULINARY SCHOOLS

Field training readies students for real world

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Portion control is the bottom line

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The Weekly Newspaper of the Food-Service Industry

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NRN Photo

Gennaro Picone, left, chef of Malvasia, New York, and David Pearlberg, manager.

Bice's Picone, Tihany open Mediterranean-Italian bistro

By Milford Prewitt

NEW YORK — Gennaro Picone, the acclaimed chef of Bice, and Adam Tihany, the prolific restaurant designer, have teamed up to open Malvasia, a Mediterranean-Italian themed restaurant that pays gastronomic homage to Picone's homeland, the Lipari Islands near Sicily.

The new restaurant blends Picone's culinary heritage with Tihany's design flair to create a casually elegant bistro right in the middle of the congested but high-rent district of Manhattan's East Side.

The 2,000-square-foot, bi-level facility was constructed in a three-story brownstone whose sand-colored facade, mahogany accents, and sidewalk cafe conjure images of a breezy, Medi-

*(See **BICE CHEF**, page 4)*

Ponderosa chief ousts senior vp; licensees cheer

By Bill Carlino

DAYTON, Ohio — In a move applauded by the chain's disgruntled franchisees, new Ponderosa chief executive J. Michael Jenkins has taken the first step in his planned turnaround by forcing senior marketing vice president Darrough B. Diamond to resign.

Jenkins, who assumed the troubled reins of the 700-unit steak house chain just one week earlier, inherited an operation suffering from flat sales and a turnstile-like tenure for top-level management.

Jenkins

Diamond

"This was a case of a guy [Jenkins] with a difficult job to do, and he wanted to do it with his own people," said Diamond, reached at his home. "I can't blame him for that. A new president or chief executive has to feel comfortable with his team."

A new marketing chief was not immediately named. Jenkins declined to comment.

Diamond's exit is the second executive shake-up to rock Ponderosa over the past two months. In April Ponderosa chief executive Frank Holdraker abruptly resigned, creating the void filled by Jenkins.

Several Ponderosa franchisees lauded Jenkins' decision, claiming that during Diamond's one-year stint, the company's marketing strategy was unfairly skewed toward company units.

"The chain lacked a strategy that was beneficial to both franchisees and company stores," said U.S. Restaurants president Steven Lewis, a 38-unit franchisee in Norris-

*(See **PONDEROSA**, page 4)*

TCBY escalates frozen-yogurt wars

By Rajan Chaudhry

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — TCBY Enterprises Inc., which operates the nation's largest frozen-yogurt franchise system, is taking no prisoners in its bid to dominate the fast-growing frozen-yogurt market.

The company's latest coup is a joint-venture agreement with Marriott that will place TCBY units in toll-road travel plazas and in airports. The concept has already proved viable in airports in Minneapolis and Atlanta.

TCBY has also introduced two successful new products this year; it is testing several other items designed to exploit its take-out opportunities; and through its re-

*(See **TCBY**, page 69)*

TCBY
Little Rock, Ark.
Primary product: Frozen yogurt
Founded: 1981
Number of units: 1,300
1988 sales: $83.5 million
Average per-store sales: $224,000
Chairman, chief executive officer: Frank D. Hickingbotham
Parent company: TCBY Enterprises Inc.

FOOD WATCH

Choco taco

HOUSTON — Carrying a fondness for regional menus to the very end, Bruce Molzan, Ruggles Grill chef-owner, has created a taco for dessert.

This taco is a cookie tortilla filled with chocolate mousse and vanilla custard and topped with a look-alike version of pico de gallo made with strawberries and fresh mint. Rather than using the traditional dollop of sour cream, Molzan finishes his creation with the whipped variety.

The taco is presented on a large, white plate swirled with strokes of chocolate, raspberry, and mango sauce.

— Tracey Taylor Woodard

Spectrum's Frank resigns prexy post

ARG's Roberts takes charge

By Alan Liddle

SAN FRANCISCO — Charles A. Frank has resigned as president of Spectrum Foods after 16 years, becoming the fourth high-ranking executive to leave the Anwar Soliman-owned restaurant group in recent months.

Frank

Ralph Roberts, president of Soliman's Newport Beach, Calif.-based American Restaurant Group, succeeded Frank.

Roberts, who remains ARG president, is also president of the company's Stuart Anderson's and Grandy's chains.

Current Spectrum employees and former staffers with ties to the company said they were surprised by Frank's resignation and said it came in the aftermath of a meeting he had with Soliman and Roberts.

*(See **FRANK**, page 69)*

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NEWS DIGEST

LeRoy combats strikers with $10 million lawsuit

NEW YORK — Warner LeRoy, owner of the Tavern on the Green restaurant here, said he has filed a $10 million lawsuit against the Hotel Trades Council, the union representing striking Tavern employees in a no-holds-barred wage dispute with LeRoy.

LeRoy alleged in the suit that the council is using a pilfered banquet schedule to dissuade booked groups from holding their dinners at the parkside Tavern while the strike is in progess. In addition, LeRoy charged that the union maligned the restaurant in a pamphlet that was handed to potential customers who crossed the picket line.

LeRoy recently ran half-page advertisements in The New York Times, beseeching would-be patrons to keep the high-volume restaurant alive by ignoring the strikers parading outside.

Marriott taps Johnson for Travel Plazas helm

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Marriott Corp. has tapped Paul E. Johnson Jr. to head the conglomerate's Travel Plazas division, filling the vacancy left by Steve Leipsner's resignation in February.

Johnson, formerly group vice president of finance and development for Marriott's services group, also oversees the procurement of real estate for Marriott's restaurant operations and retirement communities.

Travel Plazas, consisting of more than 100 roadside food-service and retail outlets, was generating annual sales of $300 million at the time Leipsner resigned to seek a post with more responsibility.

Whereas Leipsner's titles were executive vice president and general manager, Johnson's designation is vice president and general manager.

'Snag' scuttles purchase of Chicago dining landmark

CHICAGO — The pending sale of Riccardo's, a 42-year-old bar and restaurant here frequented by the advertising trade, has fallen through in the negotiating stages.

"We hit a snag in our negotiations," said Sherwood Blitstein of Centrum Properties, the local company that had agreed to buy the restaurant for an undisclosed amount from Nick and Bill Angelos. Centrum had said that it would lease the location to a restaurant operator.

The Angelos Brothers have owned the Italian-Greek restaurant since 1974. They said that excessive taxes and rising expenses forced them to put Riccardo's on the market.

Popeyes lengthens menu with addition of shrimp

LAFAYETTE, La. — Popeyes Famous Fried Chicken and Biscuits is rolling out a butterflied shrimp platter to 650 of its 700 units.

The item has not been added to the menu of Church's Chicken, Popeyes' sister chain within A. Copeland Enterprises.

Popeyes' latest menu addition features 11 pieces of batter-fried shrimp accompanied by fries, fruit salad, and a garden salad.

Head of new Oregon group steps down in transition

PORTLAND, Ore. — Betty-Coe deBroekert, Oregon Restaurant Association executive vice president, said she has resigned, effective Sept. 30, so that the board can "forge the new organization in a manner most befitting its revised structure."

ORA was created earlier this year through the amalgamation of two rival groups: the Portland-based Oregon Restaurant & Hospitality Association and the Oregon Restaurant & Beverage Association of Salem.

The ORA board must tackle several important chores related to the amalgamation in coming months, including paring down duplicative staff positions.

KFC shutters Beijing units after army attacks students

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Kentucky Fried Chicken has temporarily shut its two Beijing, China, units — one of which is in Tiananmen Square — following the violent clash between Chinese troops and student protesters demanding democratic reforms.

After closely monitoring developments in Tiananmen Square, chain executives here decided to shutter the units out of concern for employees' safety, said Dick Detwiler, KFC's director of public affairs.

"We plan to reopen as soon as the climate is better," Detwiler said.

Suffolk packaging ban put on hold pending study

RIVERHEAD, N.Y. — A State Supreme Court judge has ordered Suffolk County to delay enactment of its controversial packaging ban until an environmental-impact study is completed.

The measure, which would have outlawed non-biodegradable and plastic food-service containers, was set to go into effect on July 1. The legislation was among the first in the nation to ban certain packages in an attempt to ease a garbage glut.

Many other regions of the nation are reportedly eyeing Suffolk's restrictions as potential legislative models. For instance, the chief executive of nearby Westchester County said that populous region might follow the lead of Suffolk if the latter's ban is ultimately enacted. Meanwhile, county chief Andrew O'Rourke has banned foam-type containers at concessions operating at county-owned beaches.

Garcia re-emerges as head of new Eat Ribs concept

WALNUT, Calif. — Carlos Garcia, a Horn & Hardart Co. executive until last fall, has resurfaced here as president and chief executive of the new Eat Ribs Inc.

He said he hopes to build up a chain from the concept, which he describes as "the home of all-you-can-eat ribs."

Garcia was operations vice president of C.A. Muer Corp., a Detroit-based restaurant operator, in the late 1970s and early '80s. He was with other chains before joining H & H in 1985 as executive vice president and general manager of the food-service division, reporting to corporate chairman and president Barry Florescue. When he was ousted last year, Garcia also parted with the company.

Perkins grants Denver turf to Vista Restaurants

MEMPHIS — Perkins Family Restaurants has signed a letter of intent with Vista Restaurants, a recently formed company based in Denver, to franchise eight Perkins units in the Denver area.

Perkins president Richard Arras said the agreement opens the door for faster expansion in the Denver market.

LA smog officials reassert authority to ban drive-thrus

LOS ANGELES — After casting doubt on the enforceability of a controversial 20-year plan to curtail smog here, state officials have reaffirmed that the region's air pollution agency has the legal authority to ban drive-thru restaurant construction and tighten char-broiler emission limits.

Although the state Air Resources Board said the sweeping program to meet federal clean-air standards could not be enacted without cooperation from local governments, the board validated the proposed adoption, by 1993, of rules to outlaw new drive-thrus or restrict their design, location, and operation.

The state also gave a green light to the local agency's planned public hearings on proposals to require new equipment to reduce char-broiler emissions. The hearings could start next year.

Dunkin' erects barriers to thwart possible takeover

By Peter Romeo

RANDOLPH, Mass. — With a hostile suitor amassing shares, Dunkin' Donuts Inc. is striving to protect its independence by selling new preferred stock in a private placement and using the proceeds to pull common issues off the market.

The move drew a sharp protest from Kingsbridge Capital Group, the Canadian concern formed by Toronto businessman George Mann to grab ahold of the bakery chain.

Dunkin' "chose to sacrifice corporate value in order to place votes in the hands of a favored corporate buyer," read a statement from Kingsbridge president Earl Rotman. He accused Dunkin' management of selling the preferred stock "under terms that are highly advantageous to one selected corporation . . . to place votes in the hands of a favored corporate buyer."

"We do not agree with their characterization," retorted Dunkin' chairman Robert Rosenberg. "It's very competitive, and we think it's clearly in the best interests of this company and its shareholders."

Dunkin' has sold 28,000 newly issued preferred shares for $28 million to General Electric Capital Corp., a lender that has financed several major food-service deals in recent years. The transaction gave General Electric a 10-percent stake in the doughnut maker.

The sale-repurchase is the doughnut chain's latest effort to stonewall Kingsbridge, which has suggested a $313 million, $42-a-share buyout.

Dunkin' said it would use the proceeds to repurchase 20 percent of its common stock, or 1.4 million shares. After the buyback, management would control more than 15 percent of the company's stock, and its newly formed Employee Stock Ownership Plan would hold roughly the same stake.

Under a previous repurchase plan, Dunkin' had acquired 355,000 common shares.

General Electric's ability to tender its shares is constrained by restrictions set in the agreement with Dunkin'.

Rosenberg would not disclose whether Dunkin' has sought to repurchase common shares held by Kingsbridge. Mann's newly formed company said it recently boosted its stake in the snack-shop operator to 12 percent from a 7.6-percent position in April.

The sale-repurchase is the doughnut chain's latest effort to stonewall Kingsbridge, which has suggested a $313 million, $42-a-share buyout. Dunkin' has already enacted an ESOP, adopted a "poison pill" takeover defense, and axed 14 percent of its payroll.

The new issue of preferred stock is convertible to 700,000 common shares after May 31, 1990, at $40 a share. The company is required to redeem the shares on May 31, 1996.

The stock will pay a 10-percent annual dividend for the first three years and rise to 11.5 percent thereafter, Dunkin' said.

The preferred shares have the same voting rights as the common stock but will be entitled to a separate class vote on certain matters that would adversely affect the rights and preferences of the preferred stock.

A typical Dunkin' Donuts unit.

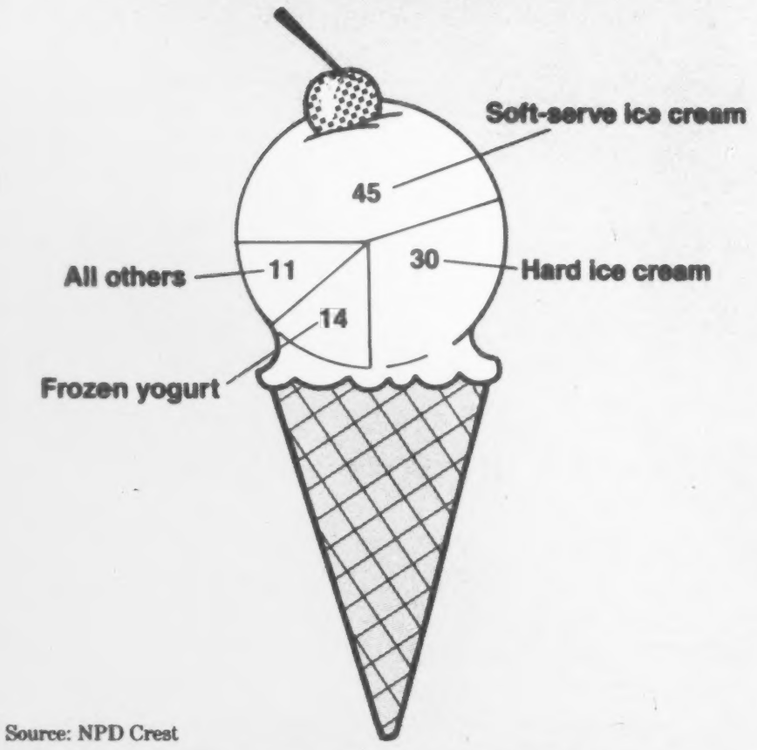
Robert Rosenberg

FACT FILE

A look at the statistics shaping the industry

SOFT-SERVE SCOOPS FROZEN DESSERT COMPETITION

(market share, by eater occasions, in percent)



Source: NPD Crest

NRN FINANCIAL DIGEST

Fair weather helps Cracker Barrel

LEBANON, Tenn. — Cracker Barrel Old Country Store Inc. said mild winter weather contributed to a 67-percent year-over-year hike in net income, to $2.2 million, on a 34-percent increase in sales, to $40.4 million, for its third quarter ended April 28.

For the April-ended nine months, the company posted a 58-percent profit rise, to $5.9 million, on a sales gain of 37 percent, to $119 million.

Cracker Barrel operates about 70 family-style restaurants, mostly along interstate highways.

Two Pesos loses $4.8 million for year

HOUSTON — Two Pesos Inc. said a $2.3 million operating loss and a $2.4 million extraordinary charge resulting from an adverse judgment gave it a net loss of nearly $4.8 million for the year ended March 31.

Two Pesos, which operates and franchises 30 fast-food Mexican restaurants, is appealing a $3.4 million judgment arising from litigation over trade-dress infringement brought by rival Taco Cabana International Inc.

For the fourth quarter, Two Pesos posted net income of $103,000 after an insurer coughed up $959,000 — the policy limits — toward the judgment. Revenues rose 15 percent, to $8.3 million.

Piccadilly posts profit gain

BATON ROUGE, La. — Piccadilly Cafeterias Inc., operator of 129 cafeterias, said inclement weather cut customer counts 1.2 percent and held net income to $2.3 million — a 5-percent gain — for the third quarter ended March 31.

Sales for the quarter rose 21 percent year-over-year, to $69.6 million.

Third-quarter results include the first full-quarter contribution of six-restaurant seafood chain Ralph & Kacoo's, which Piccadilly acquired in December 1988.

Net income for the March-ended nine months fell 22 percent, to $8.7 million, reflecting an accounting change last year that resulted in a one-time gain of $2.6 million.

Sales for the nine months increased 16 percent, to $202.2 million.

Swensen's boosts Steve's sales, profits

PHOENIX, Ariz. — Steve's Homemade Ice Cream Inc. said its August acquisition of Swensen's Inc. and demand for two new products lifted net income more than 66 percent on a 95-percent rise in revenue for its first quarter ended April 1.

Net income for the quarter increased to $378,000 from $227,000 in the same period last year.

Revenue increased to $7.5 million in the first quarter of 1989 from $3.8 million in last year's first quarter.

Both sales and profits were bolstered by the introduction of two new products — Steve's Outrageous ice-cream bars and Steve's Make-A-Wish bars, the company said.

FOOD PRICE OUTLOOK

Supply of shrimp on the rise

Every year the amount of shrimp consumed in the United States seems to rise. Demand has long since passed domestic fishing capacity. In fact, about half of all of the **shrimp** sold here is **imported.** The rest of the world rightly sees the United States as a prime export market. One of the most recent has been mainland China, which is stepping up its shrimp exports to us dramatically every year.

This season, however, **domestic shrimp** production has increased, with Texas and Florida boats pulling in more of the small crustaceans. Weather has been good, and feeding conditions for shrimp have improved over the past couple of years. As a result, the price of **fresh and frozen shrimp** has stayed relatively stable, even falling a bit in midspring. Expect prices to remain in a narrow range until fall unless some disaster occurs.

Outlook for **cod** prices is stable through the summer. Supply and demand for **frozen blocks and slabs** (the raw material for portions and sticks) is about balanced. A successful change to less expensive species earlier has kept down demand from fast-service chains.

Frozen orange juice concentrate prices could rise again. A shortage of **Valencia orange juice** (used in many blends to supply color) plus a higher-priced and lower quality Brazilian product means producers are in a price bind.

The food-service pack of **California frozen spinach** is up sharply . . . Unless disaster hits, the **California apricot** crop may well be the largest in three years . . . Large stocks of domestic hams plus heavy imports have forced **canned ham** prices lower . . . **Dry bean** prices are at record prices, while **dried pea** and **lentil** prices are near recent lows.

FOCUS | VIEWPOINT

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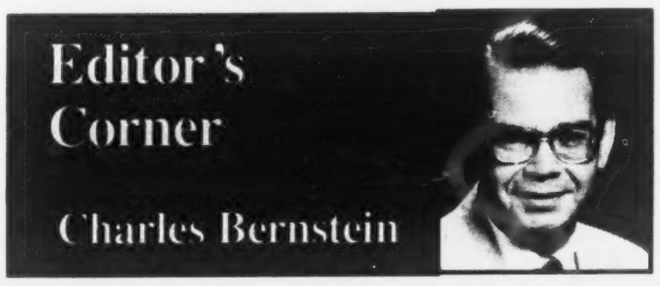
Great expectations, disappointing results

The essence of fine dining — as in any great experience — is often the expectation of something special. But frequently the actuality falls far below our standards.

Perhaps our expectations are simply too high when we dine out. No matter how may times we might have been burned, we anticipate that this time everything will be almost perfect and don't allow for flaws with the food or service.



Yet there are some things we feel simply should not happen or should happen another way. We'd bet that others agree.

Perhaps what occurs is simply a power struggle for control, with the waiter or waitress in effect vying with the customer from the beginning. It would be far better to at least have the customer feel an illusion of control.

It all starts when a person arrives at a restaurant, expecting an ideal or at least a half-decent location and is somehow seated next to the kitchen or in the path of all kinds of traffic. Worse still, the restaurant sometimes refuses to change the location no matter how politely one asks and no matter how many empty tables abound in other areas.

Then there is the propensity of restaurants to offer so many daily specials that they overshadow the actual menu. If there are 17 menu items, there may be 20 specials.

This is most disconcerting — even more so when the waiter or waitress tries to read, or recite from memory, an endless array of specials, sometimes succeeding all too well. One is generally hard-pressed to remember an appetizer special and two entrée specials in any specific detail from the whole list.

If the server is an aspiring actor or actress, he or she could enhance an acting career with the oral dramatizations of the specials . . . often a well-rehearsed, almost flawless performance.

How about the situation where the server can readily see that the customer is engaged in a conversation and barges in with this type of quip, "Sorry to interrupt, sir, but would you like to hear the specials now?" Whatever the answer, the customer is not happy about the interruption.

Then there is the silly practice of managers and servers alike constantly asking, "Is everything OK?" or "We trust that the food and service are satisfactory." Perhaps this is just another way of bucking for a big tip. But no doubt these questions are asked with the best of intentions.

Actual surveys of customers may make some sort of sense. But if a restaurant manager has to depend on patrons to tell him if the food is tasty, something is wrong somewhere. The manager should inherently know by tasting the food even if taste preferences do vary individually.

Furthermore, most customers are reluctant to say anything even if they are chafing at some grievances involving the restaurant. The typical response will be "Everything is fine." The manager learns nothing but in some cases succeeds in subtly annoying the customer.

Another bugaboo is that water is not served because of a (nonexistent) water shortage. "Everyone must save water," the slogan goes. If the customer doesn't specially ask for it, he or she won't get it.

Then there is the server who tries to push the most expensive liquor or the most expensive dessert rather than the one the customer wants. Instead, the server emphasizes the attributes of the most expensive item, much to the detriment of the customer. This overmerchandising differs from the perfectly acceptable suggestive merchandising, "Would you care for dessert?"

Sometimes the problem is more basic. A waiter is simply surly or glib — or completely lacking in flexibility. It can drive a customer up the wall when a request to leave off the sauce receives this answer, "This is the way it's served, and we can't vary it."

Maybe the meal is served too fast or too slow. How about the server who maintains a fast pace throughout the meal, seeing that all the courses are served in rapid sequence. But when the customer wants to order coffee or pay the bill, the server is nowhere to be seen for the next 10 minutes.

Then there is the credit card that drives customers crazy with separate spaces for the captain's and waiter's tips. Most people are completely befuddled, although the intent is to obtain a higher overall tip. The discerning customer simply writes in a tip for the waiter, and it may even be less than 10 percent because of annoyance with the complex credit-card forms.

A restaurateur can never please everyone, but he or she surely can try a lot harder. When we search for explanations of declining customer counts at many restaurants, these gripes and resultant customer dissatisfaction are high on the list.

Restaurateurs must encourage their staffs to outdo themselves in pleasing the customer and to equal or surpass expectations. The reward would be happy customers and repeat business rather than disillusioned customers not inclined to return.

LETTERS

Choosing HRIM schools takes careful evaluation

Editor, NRN:

Your Editor's Corner column "Educational funk: Management schools" is right on target. I agree with your premise that many schools do "represent an archaic remnant" of days gone by in the selection of studies in the hospitality field.

An outstanding school is Florida International's School of Hospitality in Miami. It has one of the finest teaching staffs and stresses the importance of the whole hotel and restaurant industry. The faculty has wide experience, both in classroom theory and prior executive skills.

These skills are passed on to the students, thus creating a real world and not just a theoretical one. For example, there are three CPAs on staff, while many schools do not have any.

The school is located in one of the tourism capitals of the nation. This allows students to observe and participate in the many aspects of the hotel and restaurant field.

Other institutions that are not located in a high-tourist area can offer hands-on training only during school breaks or the summer. A 100-percent placement factor keeps Florida International at the top of recruiters' lists.

Whether you call it hospitality management, restaurant administration, or hotel administration, it is important to encourage future students to look at curriculum, faculty, and location to ensure that their tuition dollars are well spent.

— Mark Campagnolo
owner
Joe's Restaurant
Ithaca, N.Y.

'21' Club's attraction transcends the food

Editor, NRN:

In a May 15 letter Sydney Palmer Waud, president of Four Star Cuisine, whote that Marshall Cogen should be removed from ownership of the '21' Club "so this unique establishment can be restored to its former greatness."

Waud refers to the '21' Club as a "once-venerated institution." The Oxford American Dictionary's definition of venerate is "to regard with deep respect, to honor as hallowed and sacred."

I celebrated my twenty-first birthday at '21' in 1953 and have dined there on many occasions since. It has a first-class bar (no stools) and is a unique place but never great and certainly not venerated by lovers of good food.

I have, however, always found the food at '21' amusing. Imagine, one of the specialties of the house is an astronomically, double-digit priced hamburger.

Critic Seymour Britchky in his book "The Restaurants of New York" wrote of '21' in 1978, "It is probably the most successful culinary sleight-of-hand ever carried out, and anyone who attends it once, and voluntarily returns, has got to have been fooled by its reputation."

Britchky goes on, "The ingredients are of decent quality, but the preparation of the food is uniformly lackluster, and the service pedestrian."

Former New York Times critic Mimi Sheraton wrote in 1982, "It is hard to believe that anyone would go to '21' deliberately for the food."

New York magazine critic Gael Greene, in a 1968 review, wrote of '21,' "The demanding palate is sadly neglected."

And, in 1982, Gault Millau, international food critic, reported in a review, "Cooking at the '21' is irregular; sometimes it's bad; other times it's worse."

Veneration, I guess, is in the mind of the beholder.

— Jay M. Tischenkel
Miami, Fla.